

Message Text

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ACTION AGR-08

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 EB-07 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4954

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ECON EAGR EG

SUBJ: REQUEST FOR CIGARETTE INFORMATION

REF: STATE 137527

1. REGRET DELAY IN PROVIDING INFORMATION REQUESTED REFTEL.
AT FIRST READING, ITS PROCUREMENT APPEARED ROUTINE ENOUGH,
BUT ACUTALLY OBTAINING AND THEN DECIPHERING INFORMATION PROVED
QUITE A TASK. THIS IS NOT, HOWEVER, UNCOMMON OCCURRENCE
IN WELL -KNOWN EGYPTIAN STATISTICAL MAZE.

2. DATA PROVIDED BELOW ARE FEDERATION OF INDUSTRIES'
FIGURE FOR PRODUCTION AND EXPORTS. PRODUCTION MINUS EXPORTS
PLUS IMPORTION EQUALS CONSUMPTION.ACCORDING TO FEDERATION,
91.5 PERCENT OF ALL CIGARETTES PRODUCED IN EGYPT ARE FILTERED.
PRODUCTION FOR 1974 WAS 21,439,000,000 CIGARETTES. PRODUCTION
FOR 1975 WAS 23,769,000,000 CIGARETTES. EXPORTS IN 1974
AMOUNTED TO 143,314 MET KILOS (1000 CIGARETTES PER KILO).
EXPORTS IN 1975 DROPPED TO 84,769 NET KILOS (1000
CIGARETTES PER KILO). IT MAY ALSO BE INTERESTING
TO KNOW THAT 1974 EXPORT FIGURES REPRESENTED A 75 PERCENT
DECLINE IN EXPORTS FROM 1973.

3. IMPORTS FOR 1974 AND 1975 PRESENT INTERESTING PROBLEM.

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PRIOR TO 1975, WHEN GOVERNMENT APPROVED IMPORTATION OF

GOODS THROUGH PARALLEL MARKET, IT WAS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO RECEIVE ALLOCATION OF HARD CURRENCY FOR IMPORTATION OF CIGARETTES. ALL IMPORTED CIGARETTES ON MARKET, THEREFORE, WERE CONTRABAND AND THERE ARE NO OFFICIAL FIGURES FOR EITHER VALUE OR QUANTITY OF CIGARETTES WHICH WERE ILLEGALLY IMPORTED. EVEN OUR UN FIGURES FOR 1974 DID NOT REPORT THIS AS LINE ITEM. IN 1975, GOVERNMENT ALLOWED IMPORTATION OF GOODS THROUGH PARALLEL MARKET AND GOODLY NUMBER OF CIGARETTES BECAME LEGALLY AVAILABLE. DETAILED BREAKDOWN ON 1975 TRADE FIGURES NOT YET AVAILABLE BUT PERLIMINARY REPORTS SHOW IMPORT OF 52,443 KG. (1000 CIGARETTES PER KILO) IN 1975.

4. CONSUMPTION OF CIGARETTES AMONG EGYPTIANS IS RISING. MAJOR FACTOR SEEMS BE STABLE PRICE OF PACK OF CIGARETTES, WHICH HAS REMAINED SAME FOR PAST TWO YEARS, PERIOD DURING WHICH FOOD PRICES HAVE INCREASED STEADILY. WHILE WE HAVE NO STATISTICS TO BACK UP ASSERTION, MANY BELIEVE THAT LOW INCOME PERSONS ARE TURNING TO SMOKING CIGARETTES AS DIETARY PALLIATIVE. THIS FACT SHOULD BE REFLECTED IN INCREASED IMPORT RAW TOBACCO AND CIGARETTE PRODUCTION IN 1976.

5. COMMENT. WE MUST THROW OUT GENERAL CAVEAT REGARDING ABOVE FIGURES. DURING MONTH LONG ATTEMPT RECONCILE VARIOUS SOURCES WERE CAME UP WITH MANY ERRORS IN RECORDING AND INTERPRETATION. WHILE ABOVE INFORMATION IS BEST AVAILABLE, IT SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED ABSOLUTELY PRECISE, NOR SHOULD IT BE ASSUMED THAT IT WILL AGREE WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL SOURCES. AGAIN REGRET DELAY. EILTS

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